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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 KIGALI 03782

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: PGOV, RW
SUBJECT: POLITICAL PARTIES IN RWANDA

REF: KIGALI 3739 NOTAL

1. C - ENTIRE TEXT.

SUMMARY

2. POWER-SHARING NEGOTIATIONS IN ARUSHA HAVE
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ENCOURAGED US TO ESTIMATE THE RELATIVE POWER OF
POLITICAL PARTIES IN RWANDA. HABYARIMANA'S MRND
REMAINS AN IMPORTANT POLITICAL FORCE IN RWANDA. IT
WILL NOT NEGOTIATE ITSELF OUT OF BUSINESS, BUT MAY
ACCEPT A MINORITY ROLE AFTER ELECTIONS. AN MDR, PL,
RPF COALITION COULD CAPTURE POWER IN RWANDA THROUGH
FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS. THE CDR HAS THE POTENTIAL
TO CREATE VIOLENCE IN THE COUNTRY, BUT NEITHER IT NOR
ANY OF THE OTHER SMALL PARTIES NOW HAVE THE
ATTRACTIVENESS TO MAKE A MAJOR DIFFERENCE IN THE
POLITICAL BALANCE FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. END

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SUMMARY.

3. THERE HAVE BEEN NO REAL ELECTIONS IN RWANDA SINCE INDEPENDENCE, THERE ARE NO POLITICAL POLLS, AND THEREFORE VERY LITTLE OBJECTIVE DATA ON WHICH TO BASE A JUDGEMENT OF THE RELATIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VARIOUS POLITICAL PARTIES WHICH HAVE BEEN FORMED IN THE LAST YEAR. IT IS THEREFORE PREMATURE AND HIGHLY RISKY TO TRY TO MAKE THIS ASSESSMENT. NEVERTHELESS, IT SEEMS TO US IMPORTANT TO TRY BECAUSE THE ARUSHA NEGOTIATIONS ON POWER SHARING HAVE NOW REACHED A POINT WHERE EACH SIDE'S PERCEPTION OF THE POLITICAL REALITIES WITHIN THE COUNTRY WILL SHAPE ITS NEGOTIATING POSITION, AND ULTIMATELY ITS DECISION AS TO WHETHER OR NOT AN AGREEMENT CAN BE MADE.

4. WE THEREFORE OFFER THE FOLLOWING GUESTIMATES ON THE BASIS OF THE PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL RALLIES, THE OBSERVANCE OF PARTY FLAGS AND HATS IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, SOME GENERALLY ACCEPTED
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PERCEPTIONS OF REGIONAL DIFFERENCES SUPPORTED BY MASS PROTESTS AGAINST LOCAL LEADERS BELIEVED TO BE OF A PARTY OTHER THANNE ZPJQOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, A KEEN EAR FOR RUMORS AND SOME EDUCATED GUESSES.

MRND

5. FOUNDED IN 1975 TO BE THE PARTY UNIQUE OF PRESIDENT HABYARIMANA AFTER HIS COUP IN 1973, THE MRND HAS ALWAYS REPRESENTED THE NORTHERN PREFECTURES OF RUHENGERI AND GISENYI. THAT'S WHERE ITS LEADERSHIP COMES FROM, AND THAT'S WHERE ITS STRENGTH IS. IT ALSO IS STRONG IN THE THIRD NORTHERN PREFECTURE OF BYUMBA, ALTHOUGH POLITICAL ACTIVITY THERE IS SOMEWHAT MORE SUBDUED BECAUSE OF THE WAR ALONG ITS NORTHERN BORDER. IN SEVENTEEN YEARS OF POWER, THE MRND HAS FORMED SOME ROOTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. IT HAS THE ONLY NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED POLITICAL LEADER IN THE COUNTRY. IT ORGANIZES RALLIES WELL AND CONTINUES TO CONTROL THE ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS IN MOST PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. PEOPLE ARE ACCUSTOMED TO VOTING FOR THE MRND, AND UNLESS THEY CAN BE SHOWN SOLID REASONS TO

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CHANGE, PROBABLY WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO IN ORDER TO
STAY IN THE GOOD FAVOR OF THE POWERS THAT BE.

6. THE MRND YOUTH MOVEMENT IS THE STRONGEST YOUTH
MOVEMENT IN THE COUNTRY, OFTEN VIOLENT AND INTOLERANT
OF OTHER YOUTH MOVEMENTS, BUT APPARENTLY REASONABLY
WELL DISCIPLINED.

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7. WITH THESE STRENGTHS, THE MRND CONTINUES TO BE A
MAJOR FORCE IN THE POLITICS OF RWANDA. IT COULD
CONCEIVABLY WIN A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WITH
HABYARIMANA AT ITS HEAD. IT PROBABLY WOULD NOT WIN A
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION, BUT WOULD BE ABLE TO PICK UP
30 TO 40 PERCENT OF THE VOTES FOR A NEW PARLIAMENT.
IT CANNOT BE IGNORED.

8. SOME OPPONENTS OF THE MRND BELIEVE THAT THE MRND
AS A PARTY IS FINISHED, IF IT EVER REALLY DID EXIST

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E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
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AS A PARTY, AND THAT ITS SOUL HAS BEEN LOST TO THE
CDR, AND ONLY A SHELL REMAINS. IT SEEMS TO US THAT
IF THE OPPONENTS REALLY BELIEVED THIS, THEY WOULD BE
MORE WILLING TO APPROACH FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS SOON
RATHER THAN HOLDING OUT FOR A MUCH MORE DELYAED
ELECTORAL PROCESS.

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MDR

9. BECAUSE OF THE HISTORY OF THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE
VICTORY OF THE MDR PAREMEHUTU IN THE ONLY FREE
ELECTIONS HELD IN THIS COUNTRY, THE MDR HAS A STRONG
CLAIM TO DEMOCRATIC LEGITIMACY. IT ALSO HAS DEEP
RESENTMENTS FOR THE COUP D'ETAT WHICH BROUGHT
HABYARIMANA AND THE MRND INTO POWER AND ITS AFTERMATH
IN WHICH MANY MDR LEADERS WERE KILLED. BUT MORE THAN
HALF OF THE POPULATION OF THE COUNTRY HAS BEEN BORN
SINCE THE OUSTER OF THE MDR IN 1973, AND ITS MOST
LOYAL CADRE OF SUPPORTERS ARE AMONG THOSE WHO
REMEMBER THE PRE-COUP DAYS, THAT IS THE OLDER
GENERATION.

10. THE MDR IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO CONTROL GITARAMA IN
ANY FORM OF ELECTIONS, IS STRONG IN BUTARE AND
GIKONGORO AND PROBABLY CYANGUGU AND KIGUNBO.
EVIDENCE OF ITS STRENGTH COMES FROM REPEATED
UPRISINGS IN THE GITARAMA COMMUNES TO REMOVE THEIR
MRND-APPOINTED BOURGEMESTRES AND PUT IN THEIR PLACE
PEOPLE WITH MDR LOYALTY. (SOME MRND-APPOINTED
OFFICIALS HAVE RETAINED THEIR POSTS BY CHANGING THEIR

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PARTY AFFILIATION TO MDR). OTHER EVIDENCE IS THE NUMBER OF FLAGS AND RED AND BLACK HATS THAT WE SEE THROUGHOUT THIS REGION.

11. AND IF REGIONALISM WAS NOT A POLITICAL FACTOR PRIOR TO THE TIME OF INDEPENDENCE, IT HAS CERTAINLY BECOME SO SINCE THE COUP D'ETAT. NORTHERNERS, BLAMING THE PREVIOUS REGIME FOR FAVORITISM OF THE

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SOUTH, HAVE CLEARLY REVERSED THE FLOWS DURING THE LAST SEVENTEEN YEARS, FAVORING NORTHERN PREFECTURES WITH DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURES, SCHOOLS, UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS, SENIOR CIVIL SERVICE APPOINTMENTS, AND DOMINANCE OF THE MILITARY. THIS IS A POLITICAL FACT WHICH LEADS MOST PEOPLE IN THE SOUTH TO SUPPORT PARTIES OTHER THAN THE MRND. THE MDR IS CLEARLY THE MAJOR COMPETITOR IN MOST OF THE SOUTH AND RETAINS A SMALL BUT LOYAL GROUP OF SUPPORTERS IN THE NORTH.

12. AT THE PRESENT TIME WE DOUBT THAT THE MDR COULD WIN A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, BUT EXPECT THAT IN A PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION, THE MDR COULD EASILY EQUAL AND POSSIBLY EXCEED THE VOTES FOR THE MRND, THAT IS SOMEWHERE IN THE 30 TO 45 PERCENT RANGE OF THE VOTES.

LIBERAL PARTY (PL)

13. THE PL HAS STRENGTH IN BUTARE, BUGESERA AND OTHER PARTS OF THE KIGALI REGION. ALTHOUGH THREE OF ITS FOUR TOP LEADERS ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL ARE HUTU, THE PARTY'S FOLLOWING IS ALMOST ENTIRELY TUTSI. AS SUCH IT COULD NEVER EXPECT TO GET MORE THAN 10 OR 15 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE IN A FREE AND FAIR ELECTION. THE PL HAS HAD A MAJOR IMPACT ON POLITICS IN RWANDA DURING THE PAST YEAR BECAUSE IT APPEALS TO THE TUTSI BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF ITS CLOSE AND CONTINUING ALLIANCE WITH THE MDR.

14. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE RPF WOULD JOIN WITH THE PL TO FORM A SINGLE PARTY. BUT EVEN WITH THE TWO

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TOGETHER, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE PARTY COULD GAIN
MORE THAN 15 PERCENT. THUS EVEN A MERGED PL AND RPF
WOULD HAVE TO MAINTAIN THE ALLIANCE WITH THE MDR IN
ORDER TO ASPIRE TO NATIONAL PROMINENCE.

PSD

15. THE PSD AS AN OFFSHOOT OF THE OLD MDR PARMEHUTU
HAS MOST OF ITS STRENGTH IN THE SOUTH. BUT THAT'S
NOT SAYING MUCH. AT THE PRESENT TIME THE PSD SEEMS
TO BE A SMALLER PARTY THAN THE PL, NOT EXPECTED TO
FIND MORE THAN 5 OR 10 PERCENT OF THE VOTE AND ALMOST

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ALL OF THAT IN THE SOUTH, GIKONGORO, PERHAPS BUTARE,
AND PERHAPS A FEW CENTERS IN KIGALI ITSELF.

16. THE PSD HAS SEVERAL PROBLEMS. ONE IS THAT AMONG
ITS LEADERSHIP ARE SOME TIRED AND DISCREDITED PEOPLE
SUCH AS THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE. THE OTHER IS
THAT IT HAS NO PARTICULAR IDEOLOGICAL PLACE IN THE
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POLITICAL SPECTRUM. IT WAS FORMED BY GATABAZI, A
VERY ABLE MAN, TO MOVE A LITTLE TO THE LEFT OF THE
OLD MDR, MEANING LESS PRO-HUTU. BUT THE MDR/PL
ALLIANCE IN EFFECT SQUEEZED THE PSD OFF TO ONE SIDE.

17. THE OTHER PROBLEM THE PSD HAS HAD HAS BEEN THE
EFFORT OF SOME OF ITS LEADERS, IN PARTICULAR VICE
PRESIDENT NGANGO, TO FLIRT WITH AN ALLIANCE WITH THE
MRND. IT WAS WIDELY KNOWN IN DECEMBER, THAT THE PSD
WAS NEGOTIATING WITH THE MRND FOR ENTRANCE INTO THE
ILL-CONCEIVED NSANZIMANA GOVERNMENT WHICH LASTED FROM
DECEMBER 30, 1991 TO APRIL 16, 1992. GATABAZI HAS
SOUGHT TO RECOVER HIS STANDING AS A MEMBER OF THE
COMITE DE CONCERTATION (MDR, PL AND PSD) BY STRIDENT
ANTI-MRND STATEMENTS OVER THE KIBUYE INCIDENTS, BUT
EVEN MANY OF THOSE WHO AGREED WITH THE ACCUSATIONS
WONDERED ABOUT THE SINCERITY OF THE SOURCE.

CDR

18. ALTHOUGH THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CDR IS FROM
CYANGUGU, THE CDR IS ESSENTIALLY A NORTHERN RIGHT-
WING PARTY. IT SEEMS TO BE STILL GROWING. IT HAS
FLANKED THE MRND ON THE RIGHT WITH ITS CLEAR RACIST
MESSAGE OF HUTU SUPREMACY.

19. IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT THE PRESIDENT'S WIFE
IS ONE OF THE STAUCHEST SUPPORTERS OF CDR. EITHER
THAT OR SHE IS HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH CHAIRMAN MARTIN
BUCYANA AT WHOSE HOME SHE IS SEEN REGULARLY. WHETHER
THIS IS TRUE OR NOT, IT SEEMS QUITE CLEAR THAT
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MEMBERS OF THE PRESIDENT'S FAMILY ARE IDEOLOGICALLY
MEMBERS OF THE CDR WHILE CONTINUING TO SUPPORT THE
PRESIDENT AND HIS PARTY.

20. IN EFFECT THE CDR IS THE PAT BUCHANAN OF THE
MRND. WHAT MAKES IT MORE DAWGEROUS IS THAT IT HAS
THE POTENTIAL TO ATTRACT HUTU SUPREMACISTS MEMBERS
FROM THE MDR, AND IT HAS ALREADY SHOWN ITS
WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY TO STIR UP VIOLENCE AGAINST
THE MINORITY TUTSI.

21. IN AN ATOMOSPHERE OF PEACE, WE BELIEVE THE CDR
WOULD BE MARGINALIZED AND NOT BE ABLE TO TAKE MORE
THAN A MINOR SHARE OF THE VOTING. WITH THE
CONTINUATION OF WAR, HOWEVER, THE CDR WILL BE ABLE TO
CONTINUE TO EXPLOIT THE FEAR AND ANGER OF HUTU AT THE
CONTINUING ETHNIC WAR ON THE BORDER. NEVERTHELESS,
THE PARTY'S MESSAGE IS SO HARD AND THE RWANDAN
POPULATION SEEMS SO TIRED OF THE WAR, THAT WE DOUBT
IF THE CDR COULD COME UP WITH MORE THAN 20 PERCENT OF
THE VOTE EVEN IN QDDTFTQR PARTIES

22. AT PRESENT THE OTHER 11 PARTIES, INCLUDING THE
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WHO HAVE A MEMBER IN THE CABINET,
DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH POPULAR FOLLOWING TO SHOW UP ON AN
OPINION POLL IF ONE SHOULD BE TAKEN.

ELECTORAL SYSTEM

23. THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF THE VARIOUS PARTIES
WILL DEPEND TO A CERTAIN EXTENT ON WHAT ELECTORAL

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SYSTEM IS FINALLY CHOSEN. THE PRESENT DRAFT LAW HAS
IN IT A MIXED SYSTEM, ONE IN WHICH THERE ARE
SINGLE-MEMBER CONSTITUENCIES OF THREE OR FOUR
COMMUNES FOR THE MAJORITY OF THE PARLIAMENT, BUT
PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION TO FILL A NUMBER OF
SEATS. WITHOUT THE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION, IT
IS POSSIBLE THAT ONLY THE MRND AND THE MDR WOULD BE
REPRESENTED IN THE PARLIAMENT. ADDING A PROPORTIONAL
REPRESENTATION COMPONENT WOULD CERTAINLY BRING IN

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TUTSI MEMBERS OF THE PL AND/OR RPF, AND HUTU
SUPREMACISTS FROM THE CDR. THE PSD MIGHT SLIP IN A
MEMBER OR TWO UNDER EITHER SYSTEM, AND IF THE COMITE
DE CONCERTATION OF THE MDR, PL AND PSD SURVIVES,
THERE COULD BE LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS MADE TO FAVOR A PSD
OR PL LEADER IN CERTAIN CONSTITUENCIES WHERE THE MDR
DID NOT FEEL STRONG ENOUGH TO TAKE ON THE MRND ALL BY

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ITSELF. FOR THE MOMENT, NONE OF THE OTHER SMALL
PARTIES SEEMS TO HAVE ENOUGH POPULAR SUPPORT TO ENTER
THE PARLIAMENT UNDER A PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION
SYSTEM WHICH REQUIRES THE RECEIPT OF 5 PERCENT OF THE
POPULAR VOTE. IF THAT WERE TO DROP TO ONE PERCENT AS
IN SOME COUNTRIES, WE COULD EXPECT TO SEE AN ISLAMIC
PARTY CANDIDATE, AND PERHAPS AN ECOLOGIST. THEREFORE
LOWERING THE THRESHOLD OF PARTICIPATION WILL CLEARLY
BE AN OBJECTIVE OF THE SMALL PARTIES.

CONCLUSION

24. ALTHOUGH THE RPF AND A COUPLE OF THE MAJOR
INTERNAL OPPOSITION PARTIES WOULD LIKE TO USE THE
CURRENT ARUSHA NEGOTIATIONS TO GET RID OF PRESIDENT
HABYARIMANA AND HIS ENTIRE PARTY STRUCTURE, SUCH AN
OBJECTIVE SEEMS TOTALLY INCONSISTENT WITH THE
POLITICAL BALANCE NOW EXISTING IN RWANDA.

25. WE THINK THE EXISTING POWER BALANCE SHOULD BE
RESPECTED IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS FOR TWO REASONS:
FIRST, IT SEEMS DIFFICULT TO CREATE A DEMOCRATIC
STRUCTURE IF THE TRANSITION ARRANGEMENT DOES NOT
RESPECT SOMETHING CLOSE TO THE BALANCES UNDERSTOOD
AND PERCEIVED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE COUNTRY. IN OTHER
WORDS, DEMOCRACY IS UNLIKLEY TO BE CREATED BY AN
UNREPRESENTATIVE TRANSITIONAL FORMULA. SECOND AND
PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANT, A NEW STRUCTURE WHICH
VIOLATES THE RWANDANS' PERCEPTION OF FAIRNESS, WILL
NOT BE ACCEPTED BY THE OTHER SIDE. A STRUCTURE WHICH
GIVES INORDINATE AUTHORITY TO THE RPF/PL WILL BE

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VIOLENTLY RESISTED BY THE CDR AND MRND. SUCH A
STRUCTURE WOULD CREATE CIVIL WAR IN PLACE OF THE
GUERRILLA WAR THAT NOW EXISTS. A NEGOTIATION WHICH
DOES NOT GIVE ADEQUATE REPRESENTATION TO THE RPF WILL
LEAD TO A CONTINUATION OF THE GUERRILLA WAR.

26. IN COALITION WITH OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES, THE
RPF HAS A GOOD CHANCE OF JOINING A MAJORITY
GOVERNMENT IN RWANDA AFTER THE NEXT ELECTIONS, A
GOVERNMENT WHICH COULD REPLACE HABYARIMANA'S MRND
PARTY AND HAVE THE LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY TO CHANGE THE

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CONSTITUTION TO THE FORM AGREED BY A NEW COALITION.
IF THEY INSIST ON MORE THEY RUN THE RISK OF EITHER
CONTINUING THE CURRENT WAR OR DRIVING RWANDA INTO
HUTU-TUTSI CIVIL WAR.
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